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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1218
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 1698
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001098

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: MYRADOVA SISTERS SHOW OFFICIAL "AUTOPSY REPORT" -
DEATH BY ASPHYXIATION

REF: A. A) ASHGABAT 1002

[1](#)B. B) ASHGABAT 652

Classified By: Classified by Charge d'Affaires Jennifer L. Brush for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) According to Ogulsapar Myradova's daughters, the government claims their mother's death was caused by asphyxiation. In response to a phone call by Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation founder Annadurdy Hajyev to the U.K. Embassy's Deputy Head of Mission earlier in October, emboff and representatives from the U.K. and French embassies met with Ogulsapar Myradova's daughters, Maral and Sona, at their respective residences on October 20. (Note: Hajyev is the brother of Ogulsapar Myradova. End Note.) The Myradova sisters were polite but frightened by the presence of the diplomats. They shared information regarding the official autopsy summary, stating that their mother died as a result of "suffocation." They did not offer their new telephone numbers and reiterated their request that they, rather than the diplomatic community, initiate any future contact. There were no visible security forces present at either address. End Summary.

Hajyev Contacts U.K. Embassy

[1](#)2. (C) In response to emboffs' September 25 visit to Sona Myradova's apartment, when they passed along the European Union's offer to meet with the sisters (ref a), Deputy Head of Mission for the U.K. Embassy Chris Bowden received a call from Hajyev in early October, who passed along a professed request from the Myradova daughters to contact the European Union. During the call, Hajyev also passed to Bowden the Myradova sisters' current addresses and phone numbers. Hajyev told Bowden that he had been unsuccessful in his attempts to reach the French and German missions directly. When Bowden asked if he should include the U.S. and OSCE missions in a visit, Hajyev responded that they "already knew the situation." The three European chiefs of mission conferred during the past couple of weeks, and the U.K. and French governments agreed to send representatives to the

Myradova house while, according to Bowden (please protect), the German embassy was given orders from Berlin to not contact the family. (Comment: Bowden speculated that the German government did not want to "rock the boat" before taking over the EU presidency. End Comment.) Bowden then contacted the U.S. Embassy and extended an invitation to accompany Bowden and French security officer Paul Ramat on a home visit. (Comment: The French embassy only has two reporting diplomats on staff, the ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission Henri Tomassini, whose participation in the visit is already compromised by the previous alleged spy scandal (ref b). End Comment.)

U.K., France and U.S. Visit Myradova Homes

13. (C) Emboff met with Bowden and Tomassini on October 19 and made plans for a three-party visit on October 20. The group found a surprised and polite, yet not overly welcoming, Sona at home when they arrived. When informed about the purpose of the visit, Sona said that she had not contacted her uncle in weeks and would phone her sister to see if she wanted to meet with the diplomats. She said she was uncomfortable having the diplomats in her home because their presence drew unwelcome attention from neighbors and possibly the police. The diplomats offered to leave immediately, when the phone rang from Maral who asked that the group go to her apartment on the other side of the city.

14. (C) Emboff entered Maral's apartment for the first time and saw that she has a computer with an Internet connection and a working fax machine. The three diplomats were joined by Sona, who chose to travel by taxi instead of taking the

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U.K. Embassy's vehicle. Maral said that Hajyev had asked her to send pictures of her mother's corpse, but that she was too scared to forward them or a copy of the "autopsy" report. She did not say anything regarding a request to her uncle that the European Union visit her home. She showed the one-and-three-quarter-page Turkmen-language "autopsy" report to emboff, and then explained that the report concluded that her mother died of asphyxiation. Maral also said that the doctor who was present the day Olgulsapar Muradova's body was brought home argued that it was death by strangulation, and that at least two people would have had to have been present to commit the act.

15. (C) Both sisters spoke of their concerns, noting that they did not even know if they would have a proper forty-day commemoration of their mother's death on October 24, as is practiced in Muslim communities, for fear of drawing government attention to their situation. They repeated that they were ostracized by family and friends fearful of contacting them; they knew that the world was aware of their mother's death in custody, but their situation was still quite precarious. They also reminded the group that neither daughter is employed. Emboff encouraged the sisters to contact one of the three missions represented to make sure that all details of their situation are clearly communicated, but noted that it was their decision to make.

Comment

16. (C) The short report at least is some response from the government. Asphyxiation, unfortunately, is a very general term. The daughters consistently used the Russian word "dushit," which is the same for both suffocation and strangulation. According to embassy medical sources, asphyxiation can also be the result of heart failure, a condition from which Myradova suffered prior to her imprisonment. Emboff was not able to read the Turkmen report and the daughters did not offer a copy. The presence of the sophisticated office equipment, however, makes it possible for the daughters to share the report with their uncle,

though they may be too scared to do so. This was emboff's second visit to the Myradova home after being asked by the sisters not to initiate contact. Sona's invitation to enter her home was probably a strong cultural reaction to hospitality and the need to talk with the three diplomats somewhere other than in the stairwell, rather than eagerness to maintain contact. She was visibly uncomfortable. Although Maral also agreed to a visit and invited the group in, she was equally nervous. It appears that Hajyev made the unilateral decision to involve the EU, perhaps in response to his concerns for the well-being of his nieces or -- equally possible -- in order to find out more about the causes and circumstances of his sister's death. For the sisters' own sake, post needs to balance the desire for information with respect for the sisters' desire to avoid additional -- and unfavorable -- attention from the security services. End Comment.
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